

## **LETTUCE**

**PURPOSE:** This operational guide is provided to educate Air Force club management and staff on procedures for buying and storing lettuce

**SCOPE:** This guide applies to all club food operations.

**GENERAL:** Lettuce comes in a wide variety of shapes, colors, and textures. Knowing what variety, counts, grade, and style you require could save you dollars.

### **GUIDANCE:**

1. **Grades:** Most varieties of lettuce are available in three categories
  - a. US Fancy
  - b. US No. 1
  - c. US No. 2

The difference between the grades is primarily external appearance. You can save substantially by purchasing the grade and variety best suited for your needs. When purchasing lettuce for your salad bar, you can save money and still get an acceptable product by purchasing US Grade 1 lettuce rather than the more expensive US Fancy lettuce

2. **Types:**
  - a. Boston lettuce: Also known as butterhead or bibb. Boston lettuce is light green with leaves that have a soft buttery texture and mild flavor. It is available year round.
  - b. Endive: Also known as curly endive or chicory. Endive has long narrow leaves and very curly edges. The color of the leaves range from dark green, which has a more bitter flavor, to yellow-white, which has a milder taste.
  - c. Escarole: Escarole consists of loosely bunched heads of dark green, slightly wrinkled leaves that curve outward from the center of the head. Imports are available year round.
  - d. Iceberg: The most popular of the lettuces. Iceberg lettuce heads are compact with a light green color and crisp texture. Browning of the core end is natural and occurs after the lettuce has been harvested or trimmed. It is available year round.
  - e. Leaf lettuce: Comes in red or green varieties. Leaf lettuce consists of loosely bunched curly leaves with a mild flavor and semi-smooth texture. It is available year round

- f. Romaine: Associated traditionally with Caesar salads. Romaine lettuce consists of elongated, loaf-shaped heads of medium-dark to light green leaves. It is available year round.  
NOTE: Do not buy, if at all possible, romaine lettuce packed in wooden crates. This is due to the fact they hold fewer heads, allow lettuce to dry out, and are generally more costly.
- g. Specialty lettuce: For upscaling salads and appetizers and for catered events. Try some of the more unusual lettuces such as Belgian endive lettuce, escarole lettuce, little gem lettuce, manoa, and red romaine lettuce to name a few. These will add color and textures to whatever dishes you are preparing.

### **3. Storage and handling:**

- a. Nearly every variety of lettuce should be stored in an area that is 32-34 degrees Fahrenheit and have constant relative humidity of 90-95%, and good air circulation.
- b. Do not store lettuce near ethylene-producing fruits (bananas).
- c. Do not store lettuce near cooler fans.
- d. Rotate lettuce regularly using the “first in, first out” system.
- e. Most lettuce varieties have up to 14 days of shelf life if stored properly.

**SUMMARY:** Following proper buying and storage techniques will enhance your food operations as well as save you money